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ABSTRACT

Child care resource and referral agencies (CCRRs) have a unique approach to child care staff development and training. They tend to look at the problem globally, taking account of all early childhood and child care programs, and all aspects of training and staff development, including pre- and in-service training, recruitment, compensation, and attrition. CCRRs may also have a broader view than other agencies of potential resources for training. Child Care, Inc., the largest CCRR in New York City, has responded to cutbacks in public training funds over the past several years by developing a set of guidelines for staff development and initiating several training programs. These programs are funded by an extraordinary variety of sources. Child Care, Inc. now trains over 550 child care workers a year. It draws on 38 different government, private, and corporate funding sources. Child Care, Inc. regards these initiatives as stopgap measures. Its major policy goals are to restore government funding of child care staff development and expand it to all child care workers, and to work with other institutions to create a coordinated plan for all early childhood and child care training in the city. (Author/RH)

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CHILD CARE STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING:

The experience of a large, urban child care resource and referral agency.

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Child Care, Inc.

October 1990

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SUMMARY

Child care resource and referral agencies (CCRRs) have a unique perspective on and approach to child care staff development and training. CCRRs tend to look at the problem globally within their particular areas, taking account of all early childhood and child care programs, and of all aspects of training and staff development, including not only pre- and in-service training, but recruitment, compensation, and attrition.

CCRRs may also may have a broader view of potential resources for training. Child Care, Inc., the largest CCRR in New York City, has responded to cutbacks in public training funds over the past several years by developing a set of guidelines for staff development, and initiating several new training programs, funded by an extraordinary variety of sources. Child Care, Inc. now trains over 550 child care workers a year, drawing on a total of thirty-eight different government, private, and corporate funding sources.

Child Care, Inc. regards these initiatives as stop gap measures. Its major policy goals are to restore government funding of child care staff development, expand it to all child care workers, and to work with other institutions to create a coordinated plan and planning entity for all early childhood and child care training in the city.

BACKGROUND

Child Care, Inc. is the non-profit child care resource and referral agency for the New York City area, and since it was founded in 1983 it has grown to be one of the largest such agencies in the country. Child Care, Inc.'s mission is to assure that there is an adequate supply of good quality early childhood education and child care in New York City.

Supply and quality depend, of course, on the supply and quality of teachers available to the system. In recent years, we have seen the teacher vacancy and turnover rates soar in our programs, at the same time as public funding for training child care staff evaporated. As a result, in recent years Child Care, Inc. has increasingly turned its attention to the issues of staff recruitment, compensation, and training.

Beginning in 1987 Child Care, Inc. launched several major staff development programs--major both in terms of cost and in numbers of participants. We currently operate five different training programs that involve nearly six hundred child care workers a year, at a cost of over $500,000, and a sixth program is now under development. In fact, CCI, a non-profit agency, is now the principal funder of training programs in the city's publicly subsidized day care centers. The Day Care Employees Union is the only other major funder of training at this point.

We are not pleased that this should be so: we regard the training of child care workers as essentially a public responsibility, and Child Care, Inc. vigorously advocates for stable long-term government funding for training. In the interim, we sustain our training programs out of various short-term private and public grants.

Child Care, Inc. launched each of our training initiatives as opportunities arose--i.e., as funding became available. But we did so within a framework, or set of guidelines, of an overall staff development design. Despite the scope and expense of our training programs, in the context of New York City's vast size and need our current efforts are only fragments of what is needed here. A major goal of Child Care, Inc. is to use the experience and contacts that we develop through our training programs to move the entire city toward a comprehensive and coordinated staff development system.

FRAMEWORK FOR A COMPREHENSIVE CHILD CARE STAFF DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

The role of child care resource and referral agencies in staff development:

As a child care resource and referral agency, CCI's takes a somewhat broader approach to the problem of staff development than most training institutions are able to.

First, we attempt to frame the issues geographically, rather than programmatically, and to look at the total early childhood "system" in New York City, rather than focus on any one part of it. We try to be equally concerned about public school kindergarten and pre-kindergarten programs, Head Start, subsidized day care, private day care and nurseries, family day care and after-school programs. In thinking about staff development, therefore, we try to take all sectors into account.

Second, as a corollary of the first point, we try to keep oversight over the total supply of staff, and all factors that influence it. We attempt to track--and to influence--recruitment rates, pre-service and in-service training, compensation levels, and attrition rates. Our advocacy activities, and the diversity of training models we have developed, reflect our concerns about each of these factors.

Third, we see our role as focusing less on the content of any particular training--we rely on the training institutions to do that--and more on the delivery system, on issues such as affordability and availability, and on the overall effectiveness of the total training system in stabilizing staff and improving quality.

General principles for child care staff development programs.

1. Reverse the traditional training sequence.

Perhaps the principal thing Child Care, Inc. has learned about staff development for child care workers is that we have to stand the traditional teacher training model on its head. It used to be assumed that teachers will spend several years in training, starting with general academic courses, then gradually focus on early childhood theory, then practice teaching under close supervision and guidance, and then finally begin a life-time career as teachers. This assumption reflects, of course, the traditional middle class route to teaching.

In fact, most child care teachers in New York City start by working directly with children in an entry level position, then proceed to working under some degree of supervision and instruction, then perhaps to early childhood theory, and finally to academic subjects if they choose to earn a bachelors degree. Much of their formal training therefore takes place on-the-job, while they are working full time, and in many cases while they are raising a family.

2. See the entire staff development system as fluid, not static.

Child Care, Inc. has had to learn to view the entire staffing and training system as fluid, rather than static. Most child care teachers pass through their careers rather quickly: several recent studies have shown five years to be the average career of a day care center teacher, and three years for a family day care provider. We have found ourselves using the image of a career "escalator" to describe staff development in child care programs: that is, staff development is a process always in motion, with new people entering and leaving at different "floors" continuously and unpredictably. This reinforces our first observation: staff development systems that assume years of preparations followed by a "payback" from years of work are inappropriate.

3. Take advantage of the opportunities created by inverting the traditional sequence.

We have also learned to see the inversion of the traditional teacher training system, and the fluidity of the system, as possessing potential advantages, if we can exploit them.

First, the traditional approach--years of college training followed by years of work--requires an enormous initial investment in the teacher's training before we know whether he or she has much natural aptitude for the work, or how long he or she will stay in the field. It may therefore not be the most cost effective approach. Conversely, training people on-the-job gives us a chance to focus scarce resources on training that can have the most immediate impact on what teachers do with children, and allows us calibrate the investment in training rather closely to the amount of time a person stays in the child care field, and on how far they move up the career ladder.

Second, the ease of entry into child care work allows us to draw from a large pool of underutilized workers, especially from low-income and minority groups. If we can create an in-service training system to develop these recruits into professional teachers, we have the opportunity to staff child care programs with African American, Latino, and Asian American teachers--a goal that still eludes many education programs in New York City.

Lastly, we have found that on-going in-service training is in itself a means to reduce attrition of teachers. It helps maintain a higher level of interest, reduces burn-out, and helps teachers feel that they are making progress in their work, and in their lives. This seems to apply to fully qualified professionals teachers as much as to paraprofessionals, aides, and assistant teachers.

Guidelines for a comprehensive staff development program.

It follows from these principles that the overall system of staff development training for child care workers must be:

o Affordable, since child care workers cannot pay high tuition.

o Readily accessible, in both time and location, to accommodate staff who are working parents, and who may live in areas where public transportation is inconvenient and unsafe. We need to look at cable tv shows, on-the-job training, scattered sites for training facilities, cooperative staff development networks among programs in each community, regional early childhood resource centers, and anything else that brings the training close to the trainee.

o Designed to have the most immediate and direct impact on the quality of child care. Since we don't know how long any teacher will stay in the system, we need to focus first on those things that they can apply immediately to their work with children.

o Begin with practice, emphasizing training techniques like advisement, small group discussion, experiment, and demonstration, and then gradually introduce more academic techniques that rely on research, extensive reading, and writing.

o Sensitive to differences of race, class, and ethnicity, since most staff will be working class people of color. Training should draw on the trainees' own culture and life experience, in creative interaction with early childhood theory, rather than simply imposing theories derived from the experience of other classes and cultures.

o Carry credits that allow participants to move steadily up a career ladder, and that are easily transferable from one training program to another, so that participants can steadily accumulate credits toward a degree.

Need for community-wide planning and coordination.

This approach to staff development programs carries a danger. A system that emphasizes on-the-job training could all too easily become fragmented, scattershot rather than just scattered site, missing important aspects of training or groups that need training. To implement such a system in a city the size and diversity of New York, there needs to be a central plan and central planning entity--a sort of Newtonian God, allowing each sphere (of training) its independent existence, but assuring that all parts work in celestial harmony with each other.

Neither plan nor planning body now exists in New York City, or anywhere else that we know of. A major goal for Child Care, Inc. in the near future is to explore the possibilities of creating such an entity. We will research any models that exist elsewhere in the country for community-wide staff development of child care workers, and will also look at efforts to create comprehensive training plans in other fields. In the health care field, for instance, there have been discussions among the unions, employers, and the City University about launching just such an effort.

A planning body would need to assure that the amount and kind of training available throughout the city is fitted to the need; that a minimum standard of quality is maintained; that training is affordable to the child care workers and the child care programs (by looking for new sources of subsidies, forgiveness loans, scholarships); that training sites are located appropriately; and, most difficult, that college credits earned in any one part of the system are transferrable to all others, and lead progressively to a certificate, an AA, a bachelors degree, and to graduate degrees.

Child Care, Inc.'s current training programs.

Public funds for training day care staff in New York City diminished over the past decade, from approximately $6 million a year in 1980 to $0 in 1990! Child Care, Inc. and other advocates succeeded in persuading the state legislature to provide $1 million in training monies state-wide in FY'89 and '90, but the funds were eliminated entirely in the FY'91 budget.

In response to the dearth of public training funds, Child Care, Inc. initiated several different training programs, as funds became available from private foundations, or from previously untapped public monies. We see each of these programs as demonstrating an approach to one or another part of the total problem, from recruiting new workers, to providing on-the job training, to cutting attrition.

Child Care, Inc. now has five training programs in operation. We have also developed a sixth program, a training curriculum to help child care workers cope with the

special needs of homeless and formerly homeless children, and we are seeking funds to implement and evaluate it in fifteen day care centers this spring. The six training programs are:

1. **In-service, college-accredited, on-the-job training** for 100 staff in eight subsidized day care centers throughout the city. Participants can earn up to twelve credits per year through participation in the program. Staff from City College School of Education spend one or two days a week working with staff in the day care centers, providing advisement and small group discussions. A Saturday morning seminar at City College complements the work on site.

Virtually all members of the staff at each center have chosen to participate in the program, and City College is able to offer credits at the level appropriate to each participant, including graduate credits. An outside evaluation of the program found that it was extraordinarily popular with staff, and that it has contributed to high morale and seemed to cut down on attrition.

This program was initiated with foundation monies, and is now funded by a grant from the State Department of Economic Development. Funds go directly to City College: Child Care, Inc.'s role was to develop and pilot the model, recruit participating centers, identify the funding sources and write the initial proposals to the foundations and the state. Although the state funding was supposed to be for a two year cycle, it is not yet clear whether the state will have the money to fund it for a second year.

2. **Cooperative Staff Development Networks among fifteen publicly funded day care centers in Central Harlem and in Highbridge.** These two neighborhoods of the city are designated to receive very large numbers of children resettled from the hotels and shelters. Based on the findings of a needs assessment CCI conducted of the child care programs in the two areas, we persuaded private funders to contribute to a "Special Impact Fund," to give the programs some additional resources to meet the needs of the newly resettled children.

The fifteen programs have a total of 205 staff, and serve a total of 2050 children. After several discussions among the centers, they decided to spend most of their Special Impact Fund on joint staff development, and asked CCI to organize the training sessions. The sessions take place about once a month, in the immediate neighborhood of the centers, on subjects that the staffmembers have designated as most important to them. About twenty-five staffmembers take part in each training session. No college credits are attached, but Child Care, Inc. is interested in developing this cooperative model further, initiating it in clusters of centers in other neighborhoods, and exploring the possibility of providing credit for the sessions.

Funding for this training is entirely from private sources. CCI has already applied for one small government grant to provide training through the networks, and we are investigating other possibilities.

3. A Child Care Teacher-Intern program for public assistance recipients. Over the past two years Child Care, Inc. experimented with recruiting public assistance recipients into a child care teacher/internship program. Based on that experience, we expanded the program this summer. Sixty public assistance recipients took part in a six week summer Pre-Internship Program, interning three mornings a week in twenty-two publicly funded child care programs, while receiving counseling and orientation to college.

In September, thirty of the sixty summer interns were selected for enrollment in early childhood AA degree programs at three community colleges. Child Care, Inc. recruits the interns, sets up their internship assignments, assists them in registering for college and applying for financial aid and child care, provides them with on-going counseling and support groups, and gives them a small stipend.

Funding is provided by a variety of public and private sources: college costs and child care subsidies for participants come from public funds, but the internships, the additional counseling and support, and the supplementary stipend are paid out of private funds from eight foundations.

Child Care, Inc. is actively pursuing public funding to assume some of these privately funded costs as well, and is interested in expanding the program if public funds can be found to pay for it. We have recently learned that New York State may be unable to use all the federal funds available for job training under welfare reform, because local governments are having trouble coming up with the required 40% match. We will therefore explore with the State the possibility of using our private funds as match to draw down the federal funds.

4. A nine-session training course for family day care providers. Child Care, Inc. runs this training cycle over and over, in various parts of the city, always in conjunction with a local community group that is interested in sponsoring a family day care network. Over three hundred potential family day care providers a year participate in the training, and Child Care, Inc. is the major source of new providers in the city.

The course offers a certificate from CCI, but no college credits. We have explored offering a Child Development Associate certificate, but for reason peculiar to New York City this has not been a workable option here. Funding for the training comes from sixteen corporate sources and one foundation. Funds from two state agencies also pay for some of the training, but those funds have been cut.

5. A five-session training program in management skills for new child care program directors. This year Child Care, Inc. is experimenting with training programs funded in large part through participants' fees. Twenty-eight day care and Head Start

directors have enrolled in the first cycle of this program: one full day of training each week for five weeks. At the end of the course participants receive a certificate from Child Care, Inc., but no college credits.

By keeping overhead costs low, we have been able to fund the program out of participants' fees matched dollar for dollar from Child Care, Inc.'s general funds. If costs permit, we intend to offer the five day cycle of training repeatedly throughout the year, and in different locations around the city.

6. A teacher training curriculum to help teachers address the particular needs of homeless and formerly homeless children. Discussions with staff in the two Cooperative Staff Development Networks made it clear that they welcomed newly resettled homeless children into their programs, but felt unequipped to cope with the special needs of those children.

In response, Child Care, Inc. raised foundation funds to design a staff training curriculum on meeting the developmental needs of homeless and formerly homeless children. A team of specialists in early childhood and in working with homeless children engaged the staffs of the day care programs over several months in developing a detailed curriculum. Because the curriculum approaches the problem from the perspective of good early childhood education, it can help staff improve their teaching skills in general, not just with homeless children.

Child Care, Inc. is currently seeking private funding to pilot and evaluate the curriculum with the fifteen programs in the Staff Development Networks. If it is successful, we will look for ways to implement it much more broadly.

FUTURE GOALS

So far Child Care, Inc. has pieced these very extensive programs together out of a not-so-gorgeous mosaic of public and private sources. Over the next several years, our goals for staff development are:

1. To pursue more diligently potential sources of government or private funds that would enable us to initiate new training programs, and to enter into negotiations with potential funders to design programs to meet the requirements of the funding source while also meeting Child Care, Inc.'s criteria for good staff development.

2. To increase our advocacy for public training funds, in part by making public officials more aware of the need and of the existing programs, and in part by empowering participants in the programs to advocate more effectively for their own training needs.

3. To begin the process of creating a comprehensive staff development plan and planning entity for all early childhood programs in the city.